

Transcript on Sirhan Case Quiz Released

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A Pasadena criminalist who supported charges of irregularities in the ballistics investigation into the Sen. Robert F. Kennedy assassination may have been given improper access to evidence in the case, it was learned Wednesday.

The disclosure came with Superior Judge William B. Keene's release of the 690-page transcript of the county grand jury's inquiry into the handling of evidence in the case by the county clerk's office.

Jurors criticized County Clerk William G. Sharp and members of his staff three weeks ago at the conclusion of the hearing. They claimed there now is some question as to the integrity of evidence introduced during the trial of Sirhan B. Sirhan, convicted slayer of Sen. Kennedy.

There is no indication in the three-volume transcript that criminalist William W. Harper tampered with any of the evidence. But retired Superior Judge Herbert V. Walker testified he did not believe Harper should have been permitted to handle ballistics evidence without a court order.

Walker issued the order at the conclusion of Sirhan's trial which provided that only attorneys of record or their agents should be given access to the ballistics evidence.

OK'd by Lawyer

Harper said he was allowed to examine the evidence after obtaining a letter from attorney George E. Shibley, an associate of Luke McKisack, who is one of the lawyers representing Sirhan in his appeal.

It was Harper's investigation which is said to have led to the filing of charges with the City Civil Service Commission against police criminalist De Wayne A. Wolfer.

The charges, prepared by attorney Barbara Warner Blehr, alleged that Wolfer made errors and violated procedures in his ballistics investigation not only in the Sirhan case but also in two others, including that of former prosecutor Jack Kirschke, who was convicted of killing his wife and her lover.

Although he had no connection with the Sirhan case, Harper was a defense witness at the Kirschke trial.

Harper testified he was referred to Shibley by Theodore R. Charach, a major proponent of the theory that Kennedy was killed by a second gunman, not Sirhan.

The testimony of several witnesses appeared to support the grand jury's charge of laxness in the clerk's office in the handling of exhibits in the case.

Harper informed the grand jury that once while he was examining the ballistics evidence, he was in the company of attorney Godfrey Isaac. Isaac reportedly represents both Charach in his attempts to bring the conspiracy theory before the public and Sirhan in his appeal.

Robert B. Kaiser, who authored the book "RFK Must Die" and served as a defense investigator during Sirhan's trial, testified that another proponent of the conspiracy theory, John Christian, boasted some time in 1969 that he had "slipped" some copies of pages of Sirhan's notebook out of the clerk's office.

Copies of Evidence

Kaiser also testified that he believed he could have walked out of the clerk's office with anything he wanted.

Christian, who, according to Kaiser, denied taking the evidence after he learned of the district attorney's investigation into the matter, reportedly declined to appear before the grand jury.

Sharp, who has denied as "unfounded" all claims that his office was negligent in its handling of Sirhan evidence, said Wednesday that he has appointed several members of his staff to closely examine the transcript and report their findings to him.

Meanwhile, the Board of Supervisors is conducting its own investigation in the case.